

A Summary of the Board of Education Meeting Thursday, April 10, 2008

ACTION ITEMS

- Approved a restricted consent agenda including staff personnel and the administrative appointment of Jonathan Stevenson as Activities and Athletics Manager at Oakland Mills High School, bids and contracts, the SB984 Certification Letter and minutes of closed meetings.
- Approved a consent agenda including donations and minutes of regular board meetings, and received status reports on the operating budget and the school construction fund.
- Approved a proclamation designating April 28-May 2 as School Psychology Week in the HCPSS.
- Approved a proclamation designating April 21-25 as Administrative Professionals Week in the HCPSS.
- Approved a proclamation designating April 27-May 3 as Volunteers and Partnerships Week in the HCPSS.
- Approved a categorical transfer of \$940,000 to the Special Education category from the categories of Administration (\$150,000), Mid-level Administration (\$350,000), Operation of Plant (\$140,000) and Maintenance of Plant (\$300,000).
- Approved the assignment of relocatable classrooms for the 2008-2009 school year as presented, with the addition of one unit to Atholton High School and one unit to Stevens Forest Elementary School.
- Approved the Schematic Design for the Mt. Hebron High renovation.
- Approved changes to Policy 8030, High School Graduation Requirements; Policy 5220, Criteria for Selecting School Bus Contractors; Policy 7070, Promotion for Certificated Personnel; and Policy 10040, Charter Schools; and new Policies 4090, Debt Management; and 4100, Investment.
- Rescinded Policy 5230, School Bus Contractors, effective July 1, 2008.

Board Approves Schematic Design for Mt. Hebron Project

The Board approved the Schematic Design for the renovation of Mt. Hebron High School, which keeps the project on target for a completion date of December 2011. Revisions to the plan since February 2008 include adding eight classrooms, an enlarged science lab and associated areas, an expanded cafeteria and a redesigned entry with an atrium. The Board will receive the Design Development Documents in July and Construction Documents in November.

Opening and Closing Time Changes Recommended for Four Schools

Each year the Pupil Transportation Office staff reviews the opening and closing times for all public and parochial schools served by the Howard County school bus fleet. In order to maintain or improve the efficiency of the school bus service, school opening and closing times may need to be adjusted. The following schools are recommended for a time change for the 2008-2009 school year:

| Public Schools | Current Times | Recommended Times |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Murray Hill MS | 8:40-3:25 | 8:30-3:15 |
| Patuxent Valley MS | 7:30-2:15 | 7:40-2:25 |
| Parochial Schools | | |
| Our Lady of Perpetual Help | 8:40-3:10 | 9:15-3:45 |
| St. Louis | 8:30-3:00 | 9:15-3:45 |

The principals of the four schools have been notified of the recommended time changes and have been asked to share them with their communities.

Board Receives Results of the High School Facility Assessment

Ken Roey, Executive Director of Facilities Planning and Management, and Jeff Ludwig, Vice President of Gilbert Architects, presented the findings of a facilities and program assessment, which reviewed both the maintenance conditions and program issues at each of the county's 12 high school facilities. The facilities condition assessment reviewed the structural, exterior, interior, mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) systems at the schools. Out of a possible score of 1000, scores ranged from 910 for Marriotts Ridge to 629 for Mt. Hebron.

The program assessment measured each school against the current High School Educational Specifications. Program deficiencies ranged from one percent at Marriotts Ridge, River Hill and Howard to 19 percent at Mt. Hebron. Roey noted that after the completion of the planned renovation project, Mt. Hebron will resemble schools like Reservoir with a deficiency rating at four percent or less.

The report shows that while the HCPSS maintenance program has been extremely effective, deferred maintenance across the twelve high schools totals \$21.3M, \$13.4M of which is allocated to Atholton, Centennial, Hammond and Mt. Hebron.

The school system hired Gilbert Architects Inc. (GAI) to conduct a Facilities Condition and Program Assessment of all twelve Howard County high schools. The facilities condition assessment was based on the Association of Physical Plant Administrators (APPA) assessment approach and was provided by Facilities Engineering Associates (FEA), a sub-consultant to Gilbert Architects. The program assessment was based on the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI) Guide for School Facility Appraisal and compared the facilities against the General Educational Specifications for High Schools developed in 1999 and the modified specifications for new Howard County high schools dated March 21, 2002.

The middle school assessment will be completed in June 2008. Upon completion of the middle school assessment, elementary schools will be assessed, with a target completion date of December 2008. Findings will be used to determine project priorities and future capital budgets.

Changes Recommended for Early Admission to Kindergarten

Tracy Jones, Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs, reported on the status of the early admission procedures, which have been implemented for the past two school years. Based on the data collected during that time period and the other available information, several changes are recommended for the implementation procedures for Policy 9000: Enrollment, Residency, Student Assignment and Admission. The changes include:

- Limiting early admission in the future to students whose birthdays are between September 2 and November 15, inclusive.
- Adding provisions for students who move into the county after the end of the application window but before the beginning of the fall semester.

These changes are incorporated into the revised procedures presented as an Information Item with the current agenda.

Board Considers Revisions to Policies on Community Offenses, Grading and Reporting

Craig Cummings, Coordinator of Alternative Education Programs, presented revisions to Policy 9280, Students Charged with Community or Reportable Offenses. The proposed policy includes definitions for "confidential," "criminal gang," "discipline," "gang" and "student record." Standards have been added that distinguish between reportable offenses, offenses related to membership in a criminal gang, and community offenses to provide greater clarity. Changes also include a standard and compliance statement to emphasize the role of the parent in alternative programming. Supporting procedures now provide direction on investigating offenses, different response options and guidelines for each.

Policy Specialist Ellen Miller highlighted proposed revisions to Policy 8020, Grading and Reporting - High School. Changes clarify the calculation of Grade Point Average by modifying the definition and providing a new standard, which specifically addresses marking period, annual and cumulative GPA scores. The revised policy clarifies the code of "pass" and adds a code of "X." Procedures clarify class rank and include references to both weighted and unweighted calculations. The revisions update notification procedures to align with those in other policies and update criteria for promotion to reflect current practice and the seven-period schedule. While the revisions are primarily editorial in nature, the number of revisions led staff to recommend that time be set aside for public study.

Public hearings will be held on both policies on May 8, with Board action scheduled for June 12.

Board Gets Status Report on Financial Audit Recommendations

Director of Finance Beverly Davis reported on the status of management's

response to the findings and recommendations of the independent audit of the school system's financial statements for fiscal year 2007. During the audit, the auditor noted contracts without purchase orders in place, as well as project transactions paid through direct payment processing rather than through the approved procurement process. The auditor also reported that certain signed contracts could not be located. The auditor recommended each construction project, regardless of size and scope, have a purchase order and a signed contract to provide accountability and tracking. The auditor recommended a formal bid procedures manual be developed to ensure all bids are properly evaluated within legal requirements.

The auditor also noted that no written procedures exist for the School Bus Contracting process and that the bus vendor payments are calculated in software with no vendor support. The auditor recommended the school system consider purchasing a new bus billing system with strong controls and the capability of integration with the IFAS system. The auditor noted that there are no dedicated trained personnel who possess the required knowledge or experience to write reports for financial reporting and recommended that the HCPSS consider establishing a dedicated report writing position.

Davis reported that the Purchasing Office has completed a draft Procurement Procedures Manual. Staff in the offices of Purchasing and School Construction reviewed files of all current projects to ensure appropriate contracts are executed and purchase orders are in place. Staff located signed contracts for all projects and found written evidence of Board approval of architect and construction manager contracts on all but seven projects. Clifton Gunderson, LLP was engaged to examine the schedule and attested to its accuracy. Staff has verified that contractors were paid authorized amounts and that procedures are in place to document appropriate approval and procurement of construction service contracts.

As an interim measure, a full-time senior accounting manager has been assigned to the Transportation Office to manage the school bus contractor payment system. Transportation and technology staff are working to identify and implement a software application to meet long-term financial management requirements of the Transportation Office. Currently no HCPSS technology personnel have the necessary knowledge or experience with the IFAS system. Management is in the process of hiring additional IT staff in FY 2008 to support its major software applications, including IFAS. Two IFAS support positions have been added to the FY2009 budget request.

In other action...

In his report to the Board, Superintendent Sydney Cousin reviewed the status of the Board's capital budget request as presented in the County Executive's fiscal year 2009 Capital Budget for the county. Dr. Cousin also noted that he held the final Candid Conversation session at Hammond High School on April 8 and that

he will participate in a cookoff with County Executive Ken Ulman on April 14. He also congratulated Wilde Lake High School senior Phillip Sandborn, winner of the Maryland Regional Junior Science and Humanities Symposium for the second consecutive year.

Board of Education member Patricia Gordon announced that the Board would hold another What Counts Forum in fall 2008.

At Public Forum, St. Louis School Principal Terry Weiss and parents Jacqueline Hamilton, Robert Gallagher, and Steven Musselman presented their concerns with the proposal from the HCPSS Transportation Office to change the opening and closing times of the school to 45 minutes later for the 2008-2009 school year. Student Courtney Bale presented her suggestions for a high school financial literacy course. Worthington Elementary School parent Ginger Segala expressed her view that the Board should move forward with the Mt. Hebron High renovation.

Mary Jane Grauso, President of the PTA Council of Howard County, reported on motions related to the State Department of Agriculture's plans for Gypsy Moth spraying in the county. She also informed the Board that the Harford County Public School System has decided to build replacement schools versus renovating older facilities and that Harford County is building a new high school for \$57M. Chief Operating Officer Raymond Brown explained that the total cost of the Hartford school is \$81M and other high schools being constructed in the region, which are comparable to HCPSS high schools, are costing over \$90M.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 pm on Thursday, April 24, 2008.